

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, May 22, 2007

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## Sand Lake mother pleads guilty to child abuse

Updated: May 21, 2007 08:37 PM EDT

**SAND LAKE --** A mother who left her kids in her pickup truck while she shopped for a new saddle has pleaded guilty.

Elizabeth Jane Dillon, of Sand Lake, admitted to felony child abuse. She left her 6-year-old twins and 22-month-old son inside a pickup truck in Lowell while she spent up to three hours inside a business.

She is out on bond, as a part of her plea prosecutors will recommend she not get any jail time when sentenced in July.



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## **Mother admits to child abuse**

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- The Sand Lake mother of three who left her twins and infant son in a running pickup for hours while she shopped for a saddle has pleaded guilty to felony child abuse. Elizabeth Jane Dillon, 28, admitted Monday that on Jan. 6 she left her 6-year-old twin sons and 22-month-old boy in the truck for more than three hours as she shopped at a store in Lowell. Dillon said little at the plea hearing before Kent County Circuit Judge George Buth. The charge carries a maximum sentence of four years behind bars, but prosecutors agreed to recommend no jail time for Dillon when she is sentenced July 11. Dillon remains free and has custody of her children.

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# Elizabeth Dillon pleads guilty

Created: 5/21/2007 12:16:55 PM  
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Montcalm County - The Montcalm County woman accused of leaving her 3 children in a truck for over 3 hours while she was inside a store, has pleaded guilty.

Elizabeth Dillon, 28 pleaded to a charge of 2nd degree child abuse, a 4-year felony.

Due to her plea agreement with the Kent County prosecutor, she will not receive jail time.



Dillion left her 6-year-old twins and 2-year-old child in her pick-up truck while she was in a saddle shop in downtown Lowell.

Police say they found the children unharmed, but the youngest child had wet her pants and car seat.

Dillon is scheduled to be sentenced on July 11.

Web Editor: [Michigan Online](#),



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## **Plea deal offered in sex abuse case**

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

GRAND RAPIDS -- Accused child molester Jamie VanKlaveren was scheduled to appear today in Allegan County Circuit Court, one day after he was offered a plea agreement by the Kent County Prosecutor's Office that would have him pleading guilty to five counts of criminal sexual conduct. Prosecutors in the two counties have alleged VanKlaveren has molested up to 18 youths, but Assistant Kent County Prosecutor Helen Brinkman said the plea offer would not reduce the potential sentence for VanKlaveren. In Allegan, he faces two charges of third-degree criminal sexual conduct against a person 13 to 15 years old, as well as assault with intent to commit sexual penetration and assault with a weapon.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Red Cross providing free car seats to low-income families

Next giveaway takes place Thursday at AAAMichigan office

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

By KATHLEEN POLESNAK

**TIMES WRITER**

Buying a car seat at a garage sale or getting one as a hand-me-down may seem like a cost-efficient solution to keeping your child safe.

Not so, says Gena Gates, executive director of the East Shoreline Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Gates, a certified car seat technician for the last five years, said not knowing the history of a car seat could put a child at risk of serious injury or death.

She said used seats can be dangerous if they have been involved in a crash and frayed seat belts or cracked frames also can be detrimental to a child's safety. Gates added that no car seat should be used if it is more than six years old.

But new car seats aren't cheap.

So, the Red Cross has launched a program to give away new, free car seats to low-income families in Bay County.

The program is possible thanks to \$25,000 in grants from the Bay Medical Foundation, Parent Involvement & Education Center and the United Way.

So far, 80 seats have been given away and Gates said she hopes to give away many more.

To qualify, parents should stop by the AAA Michigan office at 1111 S Euclid Ave., between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. during a car seat day. The next car seat day is Thursday.

Parents must present proof of income level, either in the form of pay check stubs or their 2006 tax return, and identification. Parents also must bring their child with them and have a birth certificate or other documentation to prove it is their child.

Expectant mothers also are welcome.

Gates said about 95 percent of parents - regardless of income level - do not know how to properly secure their children in a car seat. Whether it is because of the vehicle they are driving, the car seat's straps or the size of the child, she said parents don't always know everything about how to keep their children safe in vehicles.

That may be why car crashes are the leading cause of children's deaths in the United States, according to the American Red Cross.

"Car seats today are a really high-tech product and every one is different," Gates said. "Vehicles are all shaped differently, seat belt systems are all different and it's hard for parents to understand all those components and how they go together to make your child safe."

To help educate parents about car seats, the Red Cross is doing more than simply handing them out for free. The agency also requires that parents learn how to properly install and use the seats.

Pat Bradbury, a Red Cross receptionist who received two car seats, said the program taught her how to properly secure her granddaughters, ages 4 and 16 months.

"The baby even stays buckled now," Bradbury said. "She doesn't climb out."

So far, Gates said the response from recipients has been extremely positive.

"It's fortunate to actually have funding to make sure low-income families have the same benefits as families who can afford their own car seats," Gates said. "It's wonderful and I'm so glad we can be a part of it."

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## Well-being of children across state improving

May 22, 2007

BY SUZETTE HACKNEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Across Michigan, the overall well-being of children improved in the last 10 years, as fewer women smoked during pregnancy or went into labor early and more received prenatal care.

In addition, infant mortality rates dropped 8.7% across the state, and teen pregnancies fell 24.7%, according to statistics released today by Kids Count in Michigan, an annual data book that profiles children's well-being.

Metro Detroit also experienced an overall improvement in conditions for mothers and infants. The one exception: Macomb County. There, the study found increases in five of nine categories surveyed, including low birth weight, late or no prenatal care, repeat teen pregnancies, unmarried women giving birth and pre-term births.

Children's advocates blame Michigan's struggling economy for the increases, especially in areas that were historically middle class or affluent.

"There has been a large increase in child poverty in communities in Macomb County," said Michele Corey, community advocacy director for Michigan's Children. "There have also been big issues and increases in the use of Medicaid, food stamps and those other services for those who are living just above the poverty line."

Still, the bulk of the Kids Count study was positive:

- In Detroit, repeat pregnancies for girls ages 15 to 19 decreased 27.2%.
- Oakland County saw teen births drop 25.1%.
- In Wayne County, teen births fell 24.1%, and the instance of mothers who smoked during pregnancy plummeted 32.9%.
- Macomb County had decreases in teen births (22.2%), mothers with fewer than 12 years of education (10.2%), mothers who smoked during pregnancy (41.4%) and infant mortality (8.9%).

Kids Count compared data from 1993-95 to 2003-05.

Steven Gold, deputy health director for the Macomb County Health Department, had not seen the Kids Count statistics Monday.

Speaking in general terms, Gold said fluctuations in data are not uncommon and may not be significant. Still, he said, despite the health programs offered in the county, people fall through the cracks.

"When the economy goes down, it definitely has an effect on all aspects of preventive health services," Gold said. "People have to prioritize among basic human needs, and something always gets short-changed."

The report, which is available online at [www.milhs.org](http://www.milhs.org), features profiles of child well-being across the state, breaking down statistics for the 70 largest communities. The data are used to help local, county and state officials make decisions on how to direct resources to improve the health and safety of children.

Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior research associate and director of Kids Count in Michigan, said the fact that the instance of low birth weight babies statewide is increasing is problematic.

"The heartening news is that we've seen improvement over the past 10 years, but we still see too many children born ... too soon and too small," she said.

Contact **SUZETTE HACKNEY** at 313-222-6614 or [shackney@freepress.com](mailto:shackney@freepress.com).

**How conditions improved**

<b>• PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 1993-95 TO 2003-05</b>	<b>Wayne County</b>	<b>Oakland County</b>	<b>Macomb County</b>	<b>Detroit</b>	<b>Michigan</b>
Teen mother	-24.10%	-25.10%	-22.20%	18.50%	-24.70%
Repeat teen mother*	-26.4	-23.6	7.6	-27.2	-16.4
Unmarried mother	-9.1	5.9	17.8	-4.8	2.5
Mother educated less than 12 years	-11.6	-12.1	-10.2	-5.9	-9.5
Late/no prenatal care	-4.8	-40.6	26.3	1.7	-13.2
Mother smoked during pregnancy	-32.9	-61.6	-41.4	-32.6	-25
Low birth weight	0.5	14.9	23.1	1.1	7.7
Pre-term births	-10.8	-12.1	11.2	-10.3	-4.2
Infant mortality	-5.8	5.4	-8.9	-3.4	-8.7

\* ages 15-19

Source: Right Start in Michigan 2007, an annual review released by the Michigan League for Human Services

Detroit Free Press

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May 22, 2007

## Increase in low-weight births 'crisis situation'

More babies in Metro Detroit face higher risk for developmental problems, says report out today.

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

Women in suburban Metro Detroit are increasingly having low-birth-weight babies, who are at higher risk for developmental delays and other problems, says a report to be released today.

Low birth weight was the only benchmark that worsened in 70 large Michigan cities in the 2007 Right Start report, which used eight indicators to measure changes in maternal and child well-being.

Comparing snapshots of birth statistics for infants born between 1993-95 and 2003-05, the report showed that the percentage of babies born weighing less than 5 1/2 pounds increased 0.6 percentage points statewide.

A dramatically sharper increase occurred among infants in Macomb County, by 1.5 percentage points, and in Oakland County, by 1.1 percentage points. Meanwhile, Wayne County, which has one of the state's highest percentage of low-weight births of 10.8 percent, increased 0.2 percentage points during the report's time period.

"Even though it's still significantly higher in the poor and low-income community, (low birth-weight incidence) has grown most dramatically in the affluent communities," said Jane Zehnder-Merrell, senior researcher at the Michigan League for Human Services, which coordinates the Right Start report. "It is troubling we are not seeing a decrease in low birth weights."

Children's advocates are alarmed by the increase in low birth weight, which often occurs when babies are born prematurely or can be attributed to an unhealthy pregnancy or sometimes to nothing at all.

"It's become a crisis situation," said Gail Martin, state director of services for the March of Dimes, Michigan chapter. "Prematurity and low birth weights are the leading killers of newborns in the first year of life. It is something all of us need to address. There is something going wrong."

Approximately 9 percent of the roughly 129,000 infants born in Michigan each year weigh less than 5 1/2 pounds, according to the report. This puts infants at risk of cerebral palsy, mental retardation, blindness and chronic lung problems, Martin said.

Some births can be explained by maternal behavior, such as smoking or late prenatal care.

Sometimes multiple births result in premature babies. But just as often a prospective mother can diligently attend to her health and still deliver a too-small baby, Martin said.

When low-weight babies are born, they are at higher risk of dying before their first birthday. That is one of the state's worse child welfare problems, which put Michigan 43rd worst in the nation in 2003.

The growth in low-birth-weight infants occurred even as the report documented a decline in the percentage of high-risk women for bearing low-birth-weight children. Those at high risk included teens, women with late or no prenatal care and women who smoke during pregnancy.

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Article published May 21, 2007

Schwarz heads up governor's health care panel  
The Enquirer

LANSING — In the coming months, former U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz of Battle Creek will head an effort to resolve health care issues in Southeast Michigan, according to Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

A state panel, created by the Detroit Regional Chamber and Detroit Renaissance, will review health needs for low-income residents and medical education. Last week, Wayne State University has chafed over Michigan State University's decision to set up a satellite campus at the Detroit Medical Center, WSU's longtime partner.

Schwarz chairs the committee, which is expected to report its findings in September.  
Granholm made additional appointments to the panel, adding individuals from the Detroit and Lansing areas.

Schwarz, a practicing physician with offices at the Family Health Center of Battle Creek, has remained in the public eye since his congressional term ended in January. He also sat on a Pentagon panel reviewing facilities at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

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## Better foster care is coming

DHS has made fixes, needs further support

May 22, 2007

BY MARIANNE UDOW

The child welfare system in our state serves our youngest and most vulnerable citizens: children who have been abused and/or neglected. Every year, the Department of Human Services receives more than 130,000 complaints of potential abuse and/or neglect. Of these, more than 17,000 cases are confirmed, and the rate of confirmation has grown from 18% to 24% over the past seven years.

Over the past three years, the DHS has led a major transformation of the system. Recent tragedies have committed us to accelerating the pace. Our transformation has focused on assuring that:

- Children can stay with their parents whenever it is safe.
- When children cannot be safe with their parents, they are in as stable and family-focused an environment as possible, which includes being with their siblings, staying in their schools, and being with someone familiar to them.
- Children of color are not disproportionately removed from their homes or treated differently.
- Youths who leave foster care because of their age have a lifelong connection to a caring adult and are better prepared to succeed in life.
- The safety of the system is improved through better training of our staff, better screening of potential foster parents and adults in the home, and more oversight.

Despite our budget challenges, our transformation of the foster care system is achieving tangible results. In just the past three years, we have:

- Expanded the Family to Family approach to all 83 counties in the state. Where Family to Family has been in place the longest, we have seen a decline in the number of children entering foster care, an increase in the number placed with relatives, and improvements in safety statistics.
- Completed a pilot in Saginaw County to determine if policies or practices unintentionally result in over-representation of African American and Native American children in the child welfare system. Preliminary results identified opportunities to improve the picture for children of color.
- Established youth boards in 25 counties so older foster care youths can have leadership opportunities, learn financial literacy, and connect to jobs and education.
- Put in place monthly background checks for all foster parents and adult household members.
- Partnered with Michigan State Police to enhance investigative training for child protective services staff.
- Strengthened training for all child welfare supervisors.
- Added 51 CPS staff.

Much more must be done:

- Assure permanency for all of our youth, focusing on loving homes for hard-to-place youth,

better support for relative care givers, and a review of state law to make sure we are not ending parental rights too quickly.

- Reduce caseloads, which are substantially higher than national standards.
- Add staff to provide more oversight and quality assurance.
- Provide more support to relative foster families (for example, grandparents raising grandchildren) so they have the resources to provide stable homes.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's 2008 budget proposal asks for these things to strengthen our child welfare system. When parental rights are terminated for abused and neglected children, the state becomes their parent. The budget proposal is essential to assure these children have the care and opportunities they deserve. We will all be better off for it.

**MARIANNE UDOW** is director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. Write her in care of the Editorial Page.

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## Clinton Wants Universal Preschool Program

### *Hillary Rodham Clinton Says Plan Would Cost \$10B*

POSTED: 4:03 pm EDT May 21, 2007

**MIAMI BEACH, Fla.** -- Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton is proposing a \$10 billion federal program aimed at providing voluntary pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-old children in America.

"Our educational system needs to be strengthened from start to finish, but we have to start where it all begins," Clinton told an audience of children, teachers and parents on Monday.

Clinton said she would pay for the program by closing tax loopholes and eliminating Bush administration programs she disagrees with.

"There are so many places to cut the money that is being spent in this government. Let's start by cutting 500,000 of the private contractors the Bush administration has had who don't do a job that is held accountable in any way," Clinton said, adding that ending the Iraq war will also provide money for investing in programs.

She said quality pre-kindergarten programs will more than pay for themselves because children will be less likely to enter special education programs, drop out of school or enter the welfare system.

She also said preparing children for school also reduces behavioral problems.

"If you add up all the benefits, it's really astonishing," the New York senator and former first lady said, citing one study that says for every dollar invested in pre-kindergarten, there is at least a seven fold return. "We consistently fail to invest in what will save us money."

Clinton presented the proposal at North Beach Elementary School in Miami Beach. Before the announcement, she visited a pre-kindergarten classroom where children sang for her and answered questions.

She praised Florida for starting a statewide pre-kindergarten program, but noted that only 20 percent of the nation's children are in state-paid programs.

Her proposal would provide federal funds to states that agree to establish a plan for making voluntary pre-kindergarten services universally available for all 4-year-olds.

States that already do so would receive money to expand or enhance the programs.

Teachers would need at least a bachelor's degree and specialize in early childhood education and the plan would require low student-teacher ratios, Clinton said.

"If children start school behind it is likely they will stay behind and by the third and fourth grade they are already feeling like they don't fit in, they're uncomfortable, they're being labeled failures and I don't think that's what we want for our children," Clinton said.

States would match federal funds made available to them dollar-for-dollar and could use the assistance to expand their existing Head Start programs.

The program would start with \$5 billion and expand to \$10 billion over the next five years as states increase their commitments.

States would be required to provide services at no cost to children from low-income families and those from "limited English homes," Clinton's campaign said in a statement before the announcement.

"If states have achieved these quality benchmarks, they will be able to use the funds flexibly to meet the needs of their local communities," the campaign said.

The federal funds would be allocated through state governors.

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## Praised juvenile center chief to regain control

Troubled center gets successful chief

May 22, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Problems at the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility, including an increase in assaults by youths on staff members and other detainees, have prompted the county to rehire the director who once made the facility a national model.

Leonard Dixon, 51, who ran the facility from June 1995 until November 2004, when he was named director of the state Department of Human Services' bureau of juvenile justice, is to return to his old job June 1.

The Woodhaven resident is taking a leave of absence from the state job. Dixon said Monday he could not say how long he'll stay in the county position.

*By Jack Kresnak*

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### The trouble with migrant farm labor

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

Migrant workers, who for decades have come to West Michigan to hand-pick fruits and vegetables, are staying away this year.

As a result, some asparagus farmers are contemplating mowing down their crop since they cannot find enough people to harvest it.

And apple and peach farmers are concerned that there may not be enough workers this summer and fall to bring in the crop.

Will an immigration reform compromise -- a mish-mash that tries to make everyone happy and, instead, is just ticking everyone off -- do anything to help local farmers and the migrants who want to work for them?

As the compromise stands now, probably not.

A Senate version would allow 400,000 foreign guest workers for two years at a time. Then they'd have to go home for a year before they could return for another two years.

For would-be immigrants who would like to have permanent residency, the compromise would put greater emphasis on skills and education than it has in the past and less emphasis on keeping families together.

Migrant agricultural workers generally do not have much education or many high skills. They are sought after because they are willing to work long hours for modest pay and will move on when the work is done.

But tucked in the compromise is also a five-year ``AgJobs" pilot program, advocated by farmers, that would legalize those agricultural workers who are in the United States illegally if they have worked in agriculture for at least 150 days over the previous two years.

The program would be capped at 1.5 million workers. It is estimated that there are about 1.6 million agricultural workers in the United States, with at least 70 percent of them here illegally.

There is a program for temporary farmworkers that would allow 40,000 immigrant workers into the country every year, for 10 months. But it would hardly supply agriculture in the United States with the amount of cheap labor it has come to rely on.

There are many other types of work that employers rely heavily on immigrant labor to do -- in hospitality, construction and landscaping, for example -- for which it is difficult to recruit Americans. Some migrants, faced with more choices in the marketplace, may be choosing to work in other sectors rather than laboring in the fields.

Yet, against the context of growing unemployment in Michigan, it seems strange that more people wouldn't be seeking to fill these jobs. There are many reasons for this. In some cases, the caliber of that unemployed work force and its overall work ethic is so poor that some farmers are not actively seeking replacements for migrant labor. In some cases, a lack of reliable transportation prevents unemployed workers from being able to get to where the jobs are.

But a fundamental problem at the heart of this issue is reliance on labor so cheap that any other choice of workers is impractical.

Now it appears to make more economic sense to plow crops back into the ground than to pay a higher wage to get the produce picked.

Legalizing the immigration status of 1.5 million migrant workers won't address that dysfunction. It would merely perpetuate it.

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## Rent-to-own homes divides neighborhood

Tuesday, May 22, 2007

By Heather L. VanDyke

[hvandyke@muskegonchronicle.com](mailto:hvandyke@muskegonchronicle.com)

Muskegon Township residents who packed a meeting room Monday to discuss a controversial housing development for low-income families were divided over one main issue: Are the proposed 24 rent-to-own homes a "hand out" for those unable to qualify for a standard mortgage, or a "hand up"?

"We should look at this like it's a hand up, not a hand out," said developer and land owner Justin Williams, who is seeking approval for 24 homes to be built on 10 acres of land west of North Getty Street and south of River Road.

About 100 people, clearly divided on the issue, packed the cafeteria at Reeths-Puffer High School for a public hearing on the proposal. Some expressed fear the project would depress property values, while others expressed anger over the idea of some people getting reduced pricing for their homes.

The township board did not vote on the proposal, but held the hearing to inform residents of the development called Chapel Hill Estates. The board itself has been divided on the issue, and it's unclear when it will vote on a payment in lieu of property taxes arrangement the project needs to move forward, said Township Supervisor Pat Jordan.

The project received preliminary approval from the township planning commission in December.

The houses, valued at \$120,000 to \$150,000, would be offered to families who meet low-income requirements. They would pay rent for the first 15 years and then have the option of buying the homes at prices reflecting the rent equity families had invested in them. Sale prices would end up around \$70,000, Jordan said.

Jordan emphasized that the plan is not to "subsidize" the housing with government funds.

But some residents said such housing isn't fair or necessary.

Resident Brent Arnson said selling homes at "super-slashed discount prices" to some and not others isn't fair, noting he owns and pays taxes on a couple parcels of land "like everyone else."

"It's upsetting," Arnson said. "Why is the township looking to give these houses away? Everyone here is paying a lot of money for taxes. My feeling is fine, if some can't afford to buy and maintain a home then, OK. Everyone can't afford to buy a home. It's been that way for years and years."

Kevin Wood, one of the developer's consultants leading the public hearing, encouraged residents to be a bit more compassionate.

"We're essentially trying to allow people to build wealth and equity," Wood said.

Wood said the project developer will also make payments to cover the township's expenses for public safety and street lighting.

Proponents say the development, proposed for land at Getty Street and River Road, would meet some of the demand for affordable housing in Muskegon Township north of the Muskegon River.

But some audience members said there was enough vacant housing in that area as it is.

"There are lots of empty houses , an abundance of empty homes -- tons," yelled out one man who didn't identify himself at the meeting.

During parts of the meeting, the issue of race surfaced, making the already-tense meeting room a bit more heated.

Peggy Watkins, who is African-American, said blacks have been "red-lined" in the area for years. Watkins said she inherited some of land in the area where Williams hopes to develop and that her family wanted to do "something with it" for years, but she couldn't get a loan.

"I don't care if you call it black or white or not. But our community has been red-lined for years and ... we couldn't get a loan," Watkins said.

But more than one person in the audience said they too are faced with the same challenges as some African-Americans in the area, and don't expect to be given a chance at low-income housing.

"Everyone struggles," said Jason Hilton, a Muskegon Township resident.

Others said the development is a worthy benefit for deserving families, as well as the township as a whole.

Deborah Betts, who said her family owned several acres of land where Williams would like to develop, said people have the wrong idea about what "low income" really means.

"This neighborhood is at a standstill and the first thing people think of when they hear 'low income' is riff-raff."

Her cousin-- who also owns five acres of property in the area of the development -- agreed.

"Everyone wants to make this a racial thing, a financial thing. We need to help all people in Muskegon Township," said Retta Laajaj-Ntatoukidi. "We've been waiting for this land to be developed for decades and decades. "

Opponents have objected to the fact Williams wants to pay the township a percentage of rent for the first 15 years, rather than the normal property taxes. It would be the fifth payment in lieu of taxes -- or PILOT program -- within the township.

Jordan said some board trustees are unhappy with subsidized housing already in place. He used Arbor Crossings Apartments, a low-income housing development, at 834 S. Sheridan, as an example, claiming it has brought "nothing back into the township coffers."

"(Arbor Crossings) demands a lot of police and fire services with no compensation for it. That's what the township board is worried about," he said. "I don't think there will be a demand of services from 24 working homes, and it will open the corridor over there."

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# The Daily Telegram

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**TUESDAY MAY 22, 2007** Last modified: *Monday, May 21, 2007 2:32 PM EDT*

## Faulhaber leads program aimed at making life better for Lenawee County families

Marriages That Work tries to help families strengthen themselves.

By [Dennis Pelham](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

**ADRIAN** — In her counseling work in domestic violence and sex abuse cases, Joyce Faulhaber has seen how people can make each other suffer. Her unshaken optimism, however, is helping guide a \$1.1 million effort to make life better for families in Lenawee County.

Faulhaber is settling in to the new offices of Marriages That Work on North Winter Street as the organization she serves as executive director prepares to expand its reach into schools, prisons and the lower-income population. It is a long way from her start as a volunteer with a goal of securing funding for the organization's programs to strengthen marriages and families.

An office and four-member paid staff became possible when a series of grant efforts paid off in November with a five-year award. It funds a coalition of groups in Lenawee, Jackson and Wayne counties that includes Marriages that Work.

The mission is to provide training programs to help people learn to form healthier relationships, improve communication and conflict resolution skills in order to maintain relationships, and to help families in second marriages survive the strain of their new relationships.

Faulhaber said she has a realistic understanding of problems that drag people into serious trouble but continues to see a chance to fix those problems. In earning a master's degree in counseling from Siena Heights University, she served an internship at the Family Awareness Center in Adrian, where she worked with people involved in sexual abuse cases. After later working as a job trainer at Goodwill Industries, she became a case manager for Lenawee Emergency and Affordable Housing Corp. She then became a victim advocate in the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Program.

"I guess, ultimately, I have hope for people," Faulhaber said.

She found her work with battered women at the Catherine Cobb shelter especially rewarding, she said.

"Anything I could do to help them gain confidence and speak up for themselves gave me satisfaction," she said. "I like to problem solve."

Funding problems in the Catherine Cobb program made Faulhaber available just as the Marriages That Work organization was looking for someone to help move the effort forward a few years ago, said founding member James Sheridan, a Lenawee County District Court judge.



**LENAWEE SPOTLIGHT:** Joyce Faulhaber is the executive director of Marriages That Work. The organization is preparing to expand its reach into schools, prisons and the lower-income population. - Telegram photo by [Dennis Pelham](#)

“If we were going to do anything to have a major impact, we needed someone full time,” Sheridan said.

Faulhaber agreed to become a one-person staff and look for funding that could bring relationship programs to the community, he said.

“She works very hard at what she does,” he said. “She has a very definite sense of the mission.”

She obtained a \$50,000 grant in 2005 that paid for an evaluation of the Marriages That Work premarital counseling work and of a conflict resolution program called PREP.

Those efforts helped lead to the successful \$1.1 million grant application in a coalition with United Way of Jackson County and the Marriage Resource Center of Wayne County. The grant may be renewed annually for five years.

The grant is a major break for the organization to make progress toward its goals, said Sheridan. News of the award “was a real high, to say the least,” he said.

Recent studies have found the national divorce rate going down, he said. But the numbers show the reduction mostly among higher-educated, higher-income families with little improvement for lower-income families.

“The nice thing about the grant is that it’s targeted for low-income people,” Sheridan said.

Faulhaber believes the courses Marriages That Work can now provide will plant a seed in the community that will bring about change.

“We realize it’s going to be a slow process,” she said. People will be able to better themselves and strengthen their families by learning relationship skills, she said. “In the end, that will have a ripple effect in the community,” she added.

Marriages That Work found experienced instructors in Pat Ziegler and Kelly Sigler to staff its new office. Ziegler, a former employee of the Department of Human Services, is working primarily in Lenawee County, teaching classes that will be available to the public as well as in the Lenawee County Jail. Sigler is teaching programs to state prison inmates in Jackson who are about to be released. Dana Jameson was hired as a part-time assistant training coordinator.

The organization was given donated office space in the Adrian Public Schools administration building on North Winter Street. Local attorney James Daly is purchasing the building and agreed to continue donating the space. Donors have also provided paint, office furniture and other help in setting up the office.

More information on the organization’s programs is available by contacting Faulhaber at 266-8525 or by e-mail at [family.matters@verizon.net](mailto:family.matters@verizon.net).

-- CLOSE WINDOW--



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MARIANNE UDOW  
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The Michigan  
**Heart Gallery**

## News Release

Contact: Jan Berry (517) 373-7394 or Regina Funkhouser, MI Heart Gallery Coordinator (800) 589-6273

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### **2007 Michigan Heart Gallery on Display in Detroit**

***Public to view professional portraits of Michigan foster children who are waiting for adoption***

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**May 22, 2007**

DETROIT – “What I want for myself in this life is a family . . . .”

The statement above was made by 16 year-old Danielle, who is waiting to be adopted. Many of us take being part of a family for granted. A family provides the simplest comforts like having someone who cares where you are and asks, “How was your day?”

Today in Michigan there are more than 4,000 children without families. These children wait and hope every day for someone to adopt them and give them families of their own. Most of these children are not newborns or infants, but older children; many live with the trauma of abuse and neglect, have medical issues, or need special help.

Some of the children waiting to be adopted are featured in a heart-warming photographic exhibit called the Michigan Heart Gallery. The 2007 Michigan Heart Gallery will be on display from May 22 through June 5 at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 East Warren Ave., Detroit, MI 48201.

The Michigan Heart Gallery, a collaborative effort between the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, the Adoptive Family Support Network, and the Michigan Department of Human Services, seeks to bring our community closer to the faces and voices of children waiting for permanent homes. The Michigan Heart Gallery features professional photos of some of Michigan’s waiting children, who come from various regions of the state. Recruitment activities such as the Heart Gallery remind people that there are many children in Michigan who are waiting to be adopted.

The photographs in the Heart Gallery were taken by dozens of professional photographers who donated their time, talent and resources to take portraits that help capture the spirit of children in the foster care system. The Heart Gallery allows these children to be seen in an artistic, poignant and tasteful photographic exhibit. These kids were actively involved in the photo shoot experience some selecting which portrait to feature in the Heart Gallery, and others coming up with their own poses and settings.

"Most of the children featured in the Heart Gallery have been waiting for a long time to find a family of their own," Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said. "While we hope children featured in the exhibit will find families, the larger goal of the Heart Gallery is to promote the idea of caring for and adopting children from the foster care system. We know from experience that if these children are not seen, and if we do not continue to educate the public about older children, who need families, then they may be forgotten. The Heart Gallery is an amazing undertaking and we are thrilled the public will have an opportunity to view these portraits, get to know the children and possibly take action to see if adoption may be right for them."

These waiting children have simple requests. "I would like to live with a nice family that would let me play on the football team," explains one boy. "My best thoughts about getting a family is that I hope they are nice," shares another.

Some of the children in the Michigan Heart Gallery have been waiting to be adopted for several years and are now teenagers. Each year, approximately 450 Michigan children between the ages of 18 and 21, leave the foster care system because of their age. These youths do not have a family to stand up at their wedding, a place to go home for the holidays, or a family safety net of any kind. The Michigan Heart Gallery seeks to encourage prospective parents to adopt an older child, so these children can have a vital connection to a supportive adult during adolescence, as young adults, and beyond.

Another piece of the Heart Gallery is a small sampling of portraits of successful adoptive families. The Heart Gallery features three families that have opened their hearts and homes to children from the foster care system.

"These families show others that it is possible to build a wonderful family through adoption," Udow said. "Despite the rough times they might have faced in the past, they prove how much love and care can do for these children."

The Heart Gallery concept was initially founded by the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department in 2001 as a way to help foster children in protective custody who are waiting for adoptive families find the families they desire. Since 2001, the Heart Gallery has expanded to other states and cities.

For more information about the Michigan Heart Gallery and how you can get involved, please call (800) 589-6273 or visit the Michigan Heart Gallery Web site at [www.miheart.org](http://www.miheart.org)

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